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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Thursday, November 15, 1934.

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Hello Folks. In my last garden calendar talk I suggested that we make a special effort to improve our homes and their surroundings the coming year. I think most of us have our fall work pretty well out of the way and we might devote a little time to home improvement. In the outline plan for the improvement of our home surroundings I mentioned roads and walks as being very important items in our plan. In the first place roads and walks are a sort of necessary evil from a landscape point of view but we simply can not get along without them because they are our means of getting from the main highway to our homes and from one building to another without our getting mired in the mud during the winters and rainy seasons.

The definition of a "straight line" is "the shortest distance between two points." That being the case we should have our walks and drives about our homes reasonably straight for ease and economy of travel but there is such a thing as having the arrangement too geometrically correct when it comes to walks and drives. You have doubtless seen places where the walk or the drive leads straight through the center of the lawn to the front door of the house and there ends abruptly. Then, no doubt, you have seen country places where the drive was located a little to one side of the house but ran past the house and directly to the barn with no provision for turning or parking automobiles. Then those old places were laid out there was no automobiles but horses and buggies and it was the natural thing to drive the team to the barn. The automobile has changed all that and under present conditions there should be parking and turning space near the house without the necessity for driving to the working yards at the rear of the house to park or turn. The ideal is to have both the entrance drive and walk approach the house from the side of the lawn and as they near the house to describe a slight curve that leads into a turning and parking space. Sometimes the footwalk and the driveway can be combined to advantage, in fact nowadays few people approach our country homes afoot and by making one side of the driveway servicable as a walk it will answer all requirements for pedestrians.

The undesirable effect of roads and walks upon our home landscape will be somewhat lessened if they are dropped three or four inches below the general level of the lawn. Border plantings, especially on the outer side rather than on the lawn will help relieve the bare effect of a roadway. One of the big problems confronting us as home owners, especially in the country, is to secure suitable material for building roads and walks. In the part of the country where I spent my younger days the winters were long and often severe and it was often a problem along toward spring for us to keep on top of the mud, in fact we seldom succeeded and it meant wearing rubber boots at our work most of the rainy season. In many respects concrete makes the best type of walk but if we can't afford to put down concrete walks and roads perhaps we can get stone or gravel.

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There is one point that we do not want to overlook when we put in either roadways or walks and that is drainage. No matter how good the material you use for the construction of your walk or drive your road will not hold up if it is underlaid with water at any season of the year. One method of securing drainage is to put in lines of drain tiles deep enough to drain off the water, or a trench filled with broken stone underneath the roadway will answer provided it has a suitable outlet. Ask any highway engineer what he considers the most important things in the building of a highway that is to last and he will tell you drainage, good material for the sub-grade and the right kind of a surface.

That question of materials from which to construct the walks and drives about our homes is a difficult one for many of us. Rocks, coarse gravel, broken stones, coarse cinders and the like may be used for the foundation but we want finer material for the surfacing coat. Finely crushed rock bound together with binding oil makes a good surface as does also screened gravel that contains just the right amount of clay binder. Where clean, washed and screened gravel is used it should be held in place by means of binder oil. These oils cost from 6 cents to 12 cents a gallon according to locality and amount purchased and it costs anywhere from 30 to 40 cents a square yard to do a good job of road oiling. Any highway engineer can give you the details regarding the oiling of road surfaces.

The color of the finishing material has a lot to do with the appearance of your walks and drives. Where concrete is used the surfacing coat should have plenty of lampblack mixed with it to soften the color and take away the undesirable white glare. One more point I want to mention today and that is if you are laying out a new place or rearranging an old place study the location of your walks and drives most carefully. First of all these are conveniences and they should lead in a reasonably direct line to the entrances of the home that they are intended to serve. If it is the walk or drive that will bring visitors to your home it should lead to the door by which you desire your visitors to enter and not to the kitchen door. The landscape effect should not be lost sight of but utility should be the primary consideration. Next time shade trees.